

## On Earth As It Is In Heaven

**As delegate from her home state of Victoria to the International Union's Conference at St. Andrews, in 1955, and during the two ensuing years spent working in London, the writer made many friends among British Georgeists. An active, dedicated worker for the land values and free trade movement, Mrs. Hutchinson is honorary secretary of both the Henry George League of Victoria and the Women's Group. Her husband, Allan, is editor of "Progress" and hon. director of the Land Values Research Group, Melbourne.**

I CANNOT put a definite time on my first hearing of Georgeist ideas. One could say that I imbibed them literally at the dawn of life, for they were in the air I breathed in the family circle. My childhood was spent in the home of my grandparents as my mother had died in my early years. My grandfather (he hailed from Leeds, Yorkshire) always had a group of sons and daughters and other relations and friends around him, discussing the important things of life, such as religion and politics. There were often extremely varied points of view, which were debated with an intensity which at times rose to quite a high temperature!

Many a time I heard my elders discussing "whether Australia should be white"; or the iniquity of the tariff, and how trade restrictions between nations violated the Golden Rule; and the evil of the earth being held by a few; and related themes.

My father was a great reader whose tastes ranged from the ancient Greek writers through a wide selection of British and American writers, in prose and poetry, and from him also I caught a love of all things literary. I say "caught" because I believe these things are caught from others who show enthusiasm in a subject. My father, a man of faith in God, also encouraged me in the same way.

One could say that the two dominating influences surrounding my childhood were the importance of the Christian faith and the importance of Georgeism.

So as I grew up it seemed natural to me to strive for some sort of philosophy of my own relating to the great foundation ideas of life. Some Georgeist friends have told me that they were led to a new faith in God when they saw the beauty of the natural law in Henry George's writings. I can see the force of this, but with me it was the reverse. I had first to find a satisfactory religious basis of life, then I saw the relevance of George's ideas for society.

Probably most people around the age of 19 or 20 years go through a period of doubting everything they have been told by their elders. They are determined they will hammer out a way of looking at life for themselves. I shared this experience. It is never enough for me to be



told "what so-and-so says about this". There must be answering conviction in myself before I can really ally myself with an outlook. So like many others, I got down to bedrock, and after much reading, thought and prayer for guidance, a conviction of the truth of Christianity was given to me which experience over years has strengthened.

So I came to regard George's ideas as an important application of the Christian ethic to social problems, a way of helping to carry out the second part of the Great Commandment.

My great-uncle, Mr. F. T. Hodgkinson, was another powerful influence in early life. I don't think he ever sent a letter, no matter on what subject, but he enclosed a Georgeist pamphlet. His determination was tremendous. Perhaps it would be an excellent thing for

us all to do. After all, our friends would soon get used to it, they would only think "Oh, here's that cranky Georgeist again!"

Born in Victoria, most of my life has been spent in Melbourne. My chief training, after a general education, was for the business world, and I worked in secretarial positions for various firms around the city. A short time was also spent as a social worker with a Church of England mission here, when I realised as never before, the privilege of being brought up in a good home and good early environment.

During the War, as a member of the Women's Army Service, I worked in Victoria Barracks office and was able to get a couple of Georgeist-biassed letters printed in our Army magazine "Salt". They drew some fire from one or two other "defenders of democracy", who said that Richard Cobden was out of date, etc., etc., and of course accused me of selecting the farmer for special punishment. Any reference to land always induces people to think of the poor farmer, doesn't it? They quite overlook the enormous city rentals of land.

After the War I worked in the office of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, much of whose work is the irrigation of large tracts of arid land in the State. I enjoyed this period. In Australia, water being far more precious than gold, it was something of deep satisfaction to feel that in a small way, even in the office, one was helping to turn some of our "desert places into a garden" in quite a literal fashion. To travel, as I have done, through some very arid tract of country and then suddenly to come upon a beautiful cool-looking green and gold orange grove is an experience to be remembered in a country where water is so precious. The Commission, with the approval of the local landholders, has given a lead on our principles, by basing its rate charges on the site values excluding improvements, in its irrigation and rural waterworks districts. The area so covered amounts to approximately 20 per cent of the State.

From 1955 to 1957 I spent working in the Victorian Government office in London. In Britain I had the great pleasure of getting to know many Georgiists, terrifically hard workers for the cause. I have periodic attacks of nostalgia for England and my friends there; my thoughts often leap those 12,000 miles.

I am sure many would agree, once having read George's works, particularly *Progress and Poverty*, that the individual feels he has touched the foundation of the subject. Afterwards, when he meets various ideas and proposals in conversation with others, he feels that he can see right through and down to the heart of all the arguments put forward so often by well meaning but superficial approaches to the poverty problem.

The grasping of the great truth that the earth belongs to all men, and that the modern scientific way to keep that equity for all is the collection of the ground rent for the use of public expenses of society, is truly the

magic key to open the door to a wider horizon and solve the knotty problem of poverty in the midst of plenty. For the Georgeist sees that it is really a world of natural plenty, and that maldistribution is the trouble, not, as some think shortsightedly, the "niggardliness of nature". This phrase always horrifies me, as it leads, in the last analysis, direct to atheism. Georgeists know that we are given all things needful to enjoy here, but it is up to us to see they are properly distributed.

Since my marriage to an active Georgeist in 1957 I have been drawn more closely into the activities of the Henry George Movement in Australia. I usually accompany my husband when he travels to various places to speak at meetings, and generally lend a hand here and there. (The previous exercise at an office typewriter is not quite lost these days.)

A highlight in my life was being able to attend the 9th International Conference at St. Andrews, Scotland in 1955. The inspiration of that occasion has remained with me, underlining as it does, a feature of our Movement that is always encouraging in looking out on the world.

One does take heart for the future of our ideas when it is remembered that all over the world are folk like-minded, that we are not just a small group as we often feel in our own little corner of the world, but part of a company of men and women of all races and languages who have seen an idea, or rather, have been gripped by it, and are steadily working for its realisation.

#### TOWN PLANNING— From Page 86

not one which would assist in maintaining the vigour and life of the shopping centre.

The Minister said that, although the displays in the shop fronts of building societies were usually limited to building society matters, they were nevertheless displays and did not create blank facades and gaps in shopping streets as did many other offices. There were many breaks in the shopping facades at this end of Wimbledon Hill Road, and although much of this development had taken place before the days of planning control, this proposal would in that setting have little, if any, adverse effect on the surroundings.

#### Appeal allowed.

What bitter irony that a Conservative administration which pretends to believe in free enterprise should preserve on the Statute Book socialist legislation that can be used to prevent a concern from opening premises where it chooses. More ironical still is the Minister's apparent dislike of "blank facades and gaps in shopping centres". How does he reconcile this with his support for a rating system which generates decay and does nothing to encourage development of ugly gaps in our towns and cities?